

My Gateway to the World and So Much More.

Aside from some basic issues that I will address later, I would like to let you know why having easy, unrestricted access is important to me and my family.

In 1994 at the age of 16 I met the woman who was to be my wife. This 't be of any interest except for that my wife comes from Germany and as one can imagine, the distances we faced made for a difficult courtship at times. When we first started dating she was in my hometown in Missouri as an exchange student. She went back home after six months, which obviously didn't make things easy. At that time most people didn't have private access to the internet which left the telephone as our main method of communication.

The phone companies charged a hefty fee back then, causing us to keep our conversations brief. As time went on and competition increased, the prices went down. I also moved to Germany to live for a time. After a few years I needed to return to the US and again we were apart. But things had changed a lot by then and internet access had become more readily available. Of course I only had access through the university, but this made frequent communication possible and easy. Within the course of a few years we had gone from paying high phone bills to being able to write each other an email on almost a daily basis.

Needless to say, this made the distance between us not see as bad. And just as a side note, it also made gathering information for university projects much easier, making it possible for me to excel in my studies and allowing me to return to Germany.

Then, with the help of the internet, I was able to use it to keep in close contact with my family who still lived in Missouri. I stayed in Germany for almost another five years. The internet was my main method of communicating with family and friends here at home. Many of my friends moved around a lot and were not only located all over the US, but all over the world. With the internet, I was able to keep up with almost all of them, something that would have been near to impossible just a few years prior.

During my time in Germany I also befriended many people from countries on almost every continent and am now able to keep in touch with them as well as old friends still scattered across the country and globe. Moreover, my wife and I can keep in touch with her family. Ten years ago this would not have been possible and may have been a deciding factor in the future of our relationship. With new internet tools like Voice Over IP, we can even call them at home or on their computer. Because of the innovations made over the last decade, family and friends are just a click away. The internet has become an invaluable tool in our lives and the thought of having it be controlled by those only seeking larger profits makes me fearful that we might be taking a step back to the days when my wife and I

were still dating and had to pay outrageous fees just to talk to each other for just a few minutes.

Millions of families rely on readily available internet access to stay close to those they love and to threaten that or damage that would be devastating them.

Aside from using the internet to keep in touch with loved ones, the internet has become perhaps the most important tool for businesses. I am 100% reliable on solid internet access for my work and I can hardly think of a profession where this isn't the case.

In closing, Net Neutrality is essential to free speech, equal opportunity and economic innovation in America. Since the FCC removed this basic protection in 2005, the top executives of phone and cable companies have stated their intention to become the Internet's gatekeepers and to discriminate against Web sites that don't pay their added tolls.

This fundamental change would end the open Internet as we know it. It would damage my ability to connect with others, share information and participate in our 21st century democracy and economy. The FCC must ensure that broadband providers do not block, interfere with or discriminate against any lawful Internet traffic based on its ownership, source or destination. They must make sure that this great tool is available to all and their decisions benefit those they serve, the public, and not allow themselves to bend to the will of special interests and those corporations that would seek to use this tool only as another means of generating profit. If those top executives of major telephone and cable companies are allowed to have their way, we'll see stagnation and a decline in the diversity of information that is available today.

It is ironic that America prides itself on having an open market economy, considering that time and time again policy makers choose to regulate the private sector to benefit larger corporations which has increasingly lead to fewer choices. The internet has proven, in it's current loosely regulated state, to counteract this horrible trend by providing an outlet to a much more diverse group of vendors than we might have otherwise in it's absence. I can only hope that the FCC will make its judgment based on the real facts and not based on the rhetoric of lobbyist and policy makers who serve their own interests and not those of the public. We are the ones who loose if the they win and they are but few. We are many. Is it fair to out way the needs of the many for the needs of a small group of people that already have so much? I ask you to consider all of this when making your decision.